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POTGIETER, TRIGARDT AND PRETORIUS SEARCHING FOR THE VAN RENSBURG TREK.

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With 1 Map.

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When following the history of the Van Rensburg trek to its doom, we left the trek under Louis Trigardt at Strijdpoot. From there, Louis Trigardt followed the trail of Van Rensburg in easy stages until he arrived, after passing Mara, at the western corner of the Zoutpansberg range. Here, to his surprise, he met with the spoors of the Van Rensburg wagons turning back. Naturally, he did not proceed, but drew his own wagons into lager and proceeded to investigate. Some dead cattle and the appearance of the fly, of the whereabouts of which Bechuanas, in the Free State, had already warned the voortrekkers, soon told him the reason of Van Rensburg's alteration of plans. As Trigardt returned to his camp, he met with the party of his leader, General Hendrik Potgieter, who was visiting his advance columns, his "voorst mense," to see what they were doing. This was on the 24th June, 1836. Not finding Van Rensburg's trek with Trigardt, Potgieter and his party proceeded north-eastward. He was travelling with carts and horses, and hoped to get through the fly-belt without losses.

It has been said that the object of General Potgieter was to find a road to Inhambane, but I think that the sole object of Potgieter was to get into touch with the Van Rensburg expedition. Potgieter turned back as soon as he met with native traders in Mashonaland from Delagoa Bay, who informed him where Delagoa Bay was, namely, south-east. Why, if his objective was Inhambane should he turn back then? Potgieter had with him men who had relations amongst the voortrekkers of Van Rensburg. That was probably the reason why these men had accompanied him. When Potgieter and his men found out that Van Rensburg was more than a week in advance of them, they thought that to follow Van Rensburg's spoor would handicap them too much, and that it would take too long to catch up with the Van Rensburg trek in that way. These voortrekkers had so far travelled over high veld country only

through the Free State and the Transvaal, where they could move on quickly without much road-making. Not knowing the country that Van Rensburg was now travelling through, they imagined that the same progress would be kept up by Van Rensburg. Potgieter not being better informed regarding the position of Delagoa Bay than his sub-leaders, Van Rensburg and Trigardt, concluded that, sooner or later, Van Rensburg would reach the eastern end of the Zoutpansberg range and would again be moving north-east. Probably natives informed him that the Zoutpansberg range was bending northward not so very far east. It is my opinion that Potgieter's intention was to cut across the spoor of Van Rensburg by following a chord across the partial circle that he thought Van Rensburg would be describing in his route. As soon as Potgieter learnt that Delagoa Bay was situated south-east, and recognised that Van Rensburg must also have obtained this same information from Delagoa Bay native traders, whose trade route he must have crossed further south, he concluded that further progress in a north-easterly direction was futile, and he turned back.

He did not go back on his own spoor as he wanted to learn as much as possible of the country he passed through. Perhaps, he also wanted to obtain better water supply than that previously encountered. He struck southward towards the Zoutpansberg range, investigated the lower Njelele rivers (with which country he was much impressed) and, passing Messina, came again to the Saltpan and so reached Trigardt's camp. It is said that, on this journey back, Potgieter crossed the Zoutpansberg range. In my opinion that would have been an impossible feat. Perhaps the story originated from the report of J. G. S. Bronckhorst that the expedition found copper north of the Zoutpansberg range, opposite the camp of Trigardt, where it was then situated south of the range. These Boers, when they saw a range from the other side, were able to form a very fair idea of their whereabouts. I do not think that such a note of direction must be taken too literally. It would have been impossible for Potgieter and his men to have crossed the Zoutpansberg range with their carts, in the time at Potgieter's disposal.

When General Potgieter returned to Trigardt's lager he met Trigardt. A council of war took place wherein Potgieter informed Trigardt that it was useless continuing to look for the Van Rensburg expedition in a north-easterly direction, but that, on the contrary, the search would have to be continued in a south-easterly direction, and he prevailed upon Trigardt to undertake that search.

I have been contradicting the accepted version of this history, according to which Potgieter's trip into Mashonaland and Trigardt's ride after Van Rensburg were contemporaneous. It is due to this mistaken idea—namely, that Trigardt started on his trip after Van Rensburg a month before he actually did

so and at the same time that Potgieter went north—that Trigardt was alleged to have moved about the country in that erratic manner. (See map.) The poor man had to be made to do something in that supposed month of travelling. We can prove, out of his diaries, that supposition to be entirely without foundation. That alleged journey did not take place in the way it is being told us. Leaving documental proof out for the present, let us, for the moment, visualize the position of the voortrekkers at the time Potgieter and Trigardt met for the first time near the Saltpan. Here are two small bands of voortrekkers moving in a strange country, under conditions full of danger. The two groups are none too strong for meeting dangerous contingencies. Trigardt's group consisted of nine men able to carry arms, Potgieter's of eleven. Is it likely that these cautious leaders would have agreed to divide their forces still further, one party to proceed to Mashonaland, another to ride after Van Rensburg, and the remnant be left to defend a lager with women and children? And what was Trigardt busy with at that moment? He had found the cause of Van Rensburg's doubling back on his track. He had decided, for the sake of greater safety, to move his camp further away from the fly-infested land. Would he leave the selection of a new place for a lager to others, especially when his son was also to leave the camp and go with him after Van Rensburg? The selection of a new camping place was not a simple matter which could be left to others of whose discretion, we know, Trigardt did not have an exaggerated opinion. The question of water and of grazing had to be considered, and, above all, the safety of the lager against attacks by natives, whom Trigardt did not know. Not only had the lager to be put into a safe place, but the defences had to be satisfactorily arranged. Would Trigardt—taking with him his son, the only man he could rely on—leave this to others, whilst Potgieter was also away and beyond rendering assistance? Old Louis Trigardt was a careful man. He would certainly not have committed or countenanced such rashness.

On the contrary, there is documentary evidence that the two trips of Potgieter into Mashonaland, and the ride of Trigardt after Van Rensburg, did not take place simultaneously. A certain Johannes Gerhardus Stephanus Bronckhorst has given us a very fine description of Potgieter's trip into Mashonaland. Bronckhorst was one of Potgieter's party, and his description of that Mashonaland trip is so full of details that it could not have been compiled from hearsay. Bronckhorst was evidently with Potgieter on his trip into Mashonaland; and he also mentions that he was with Potgieter in July, 1836. We know, moreover, from the diaries of Trigardt that Bronckhorst accompanied Trigardt on his ride after Van Rensburg.

If we accept the conclusion that the two trips mentioned took place successively, then we also have an explanation of the sudden deaths of so many horses on Trigardt's ride after Van

Rensburg. We know of at least three horses which were lost by the five men who undertook that ride—a number quite out of proportion to the number of riders, even supposing that they had some spare horses with them. What did these horses die of? Were they over-ridden? We know from the distance that the party rode and the time of riding (as recorded by Trigardt) that old Louis Trigardt did not over-exert his horses. In fact, he mostly travelled at that easy jog-trot or ambling step adopted by Boers on distance riding. Was it then horse-sickness that caused these deaths? The months in question were from the end of June to the middle of August—the healthiest months for horses, when horse-sickness is practically out of the question. What then did those horses die of? They died of fly disease! These were the fly-infested horses that had come back from Potgieter's Mashonaland trip.

I have already mentioned that Louis Trigardt's entry in his diary under date of 5th August, 1836 (when he records that then only he met the first Knobnose induna) entirely upsets that old version, according to which he was then on his return journey from the chief Hlekane. Trigardt's entry the following day, the 6th August, 1836, discloses where Trigardt then was and the direction in which he was travelling. He was then on the right bank of the Limvubu River and travelling in a south-easterly direction. He tells us that he was moving "Tot De Jukeeri." Nobody has, so far, been able to explain this entry. 'NKuri was one of the chief indunas of the chief Hlekane, and probably "De Jukeeri" was the Ijsterberg mountains, which was then occupied by 'NKuri, the son of Hlekane's induna of the same name. From where Trigardt's party was on the 5th August, 1836, it took these riders three days to reach their lager on their return journey. How they could possibly put in, for the same distance, some forty odd days on the forward journey requires much explaining away. I think that my explanation that Trigardt's ride after Van Rensburg's trek started a month later than what has been accepted, and that it started only after the return of Potgieter from Mashonaland, must be accepted.

I shall now give first the version of Trigardt's ride after Van Rensburg as it is being told us to-day, pointing out the improbabilities as I go along, and then give you what I consider to be the correct version of the happenings.

According to the present version, Louis Trigardt left his camp near the west end of the Zoutpansberg range in search of Van Rensburg's party about the 27th June, 1836. He was accompanied by his son Carolus and three of General Potgieter's men, named T. Roberts, J. G. S. Bronckhorst and A. Swanepoel. These men travelled on horseback and followed Van Rensburg's spoor eastward into the Klein Spelonken. Then they, somehow, left the Van Rensburg spoor, not following it across the Zoutpansberg range, but continued in an eastward direction. There is a map in existence showing the routes followed by the various

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crossed near Sekwati's poort (Strijdpoot). Further, in travelling westward he must for days have travelled along the foot of, or parallel with the Drakensberg range, through which he must have known the Balula River had to wind its course, and eventually break through. The escarpments of the Drakensberg must have impressed themselves upon him. How, in view of such ocular demonstration any man would later have attempted to follow the course of the Balula or Olifants River from Theunispoort downward is beyond understanding. These voortrekkers were anything but fools. The fact is that Trigardt's party never travelled that route from the junction of the Olifants with the Limpopo to Matiba's kraal near Pietersburg. I shall prove that later. Trigardt's horse patrol never was near the junction of the Olifants and Limpopo Rivers, not at Matiba's kraal.

A year, or to be exact, 14 months later, Trigardt came into the neighbourhood of Matiba's kraal and then he did not know where he was. He recorded that he was suspicious of his guide and wanted to tie him up. If a Boer had been in a neighbourhood a year before, he would have remembered the place. When Trigardt actually was at the farm Matibaskraal, he called the place Salpeterfontein. He could not possibly have called it Matiba's kraal, because that country belonged to the chief Mojapelo. So it is shown how easily investigators, not knowing a country and its history, are misled. Here we have the name Matiba's kraal mentioned by Trigardt on the 31st July, 1836, we have the information from natives at Matiba's kraal, near Pietersburg, that they knew "Baas Lewis," and that he had been there. Any man would imagine he was on the correct trail. But it is wrong all the same; because on further investigation natives say that when Trigardt was there he came with his full trek, with a lot of wagons, with large herds of livestock, with women and children. But, when Trigardt made that first entry in his diary he was on horseback, was accompanied by only four men, his trek was at the west end of the Zoutpansberg range, far away. Trigardt's appearance on the farm Matiba's kraal, near Pietersburg, and that entry of his on the 31st July, 1836, do not, therefore, deal with the same incident.

From Matiba's kraal, near Pietersburg, Trigardt is supposed to have gone back on his trail, the reason suggested being that he wanted to mislead the guides the chief Hlekane had given him, so that they should not know where his lager was. This contention leaves out of consideration the fact that the guides were given by the chief to show the road, i.e., a shorter road to Matiba's camp than that by which Trigardt had come, and that, therefore, these guides must have known where Trigardt's camp was. Again, it is practically impossible to mislead a native as to the whereabouts of an established camp, and it was especially difficult in these times. The invasion of the country by white people was of such importance and interest to the natives, that

they were sure to know every smallest detail of the invasion that was worth knowing. In addition, that country about Matiba's kraal, near Pietersburg and east thereof (the country of the western slopes of the Haenertsburg mountains) was, especially in those times, about the worst piece of ground that could possibly have been chosen for misleading natives. If one wishes to mislead anybody, especially a native, regarding one's movements, there are some basic conditions required to enable one to do so. It is necessary that the country in which the attempt is made should be relatively uninhabited, or the party to be deceived would be constantly kept informed of one's movements. The topographical conditions should not hamper one's movements, but allow one every facility for dodging and doubling. The nature of the country should be such as to screen one's movements. None of these conditions are applicable to that part of the country which Trigardt is supposed to have selected for misleading his guides. It was, in the time of Trigardt, the most thickly populated part of the Transvaal, and also the best guarded one. Imagine a capital T standing on its head with its shank end upwards. That shank end is the Haenertsburg range, the two parts of the head represent the Malips range on the Highveld, and the Drakensberg range on the Low-country. In the two angles so formed, in its many inaccessible valleys, dongas and corners of its mountains, were living many tribes who had fled from Umsiligatsi in the south and from Manukosi in the east. A leopard and an antelope occupying for the time being, under circumstances beyond their control, a piece of log floating down stream, may keep peace for a while, but they keep watching one another all the time.

These tribes living in that maze of steep valleys and the neighbouring kopjes may have kept peace for the time being, but they were watching all the time; every kopje had its guard straining his eyes, noting and reporting every movement. No goat could move without being seen, especially as practically all that country was barren of any tree growth or cover. The steep valleys limited one's movements. Anyone entering one defile had either to come out at the other end or turn back. There was no possibility of climbing up the slope on one side or descending the abyss on the other without being noticed. The story about trying to mislead one's guide has to be discarded for it could not have happened in that country.

After leaving Matiba's kraal and first going back on his trail, Trigardt is said to have come on the fourth day to the Sand River. Now, there is no Sand River down in the Low-country in those parts, not what the Boers imply by the name "Sand River." The only Sand River is near Matiba's kraal. After four days Trigardt is supposed to be again somewhere about Matiba's kraal, although he did not know that country a year later. He must have crossed the Haenertsburg mountains twice in those four days, for he must have crossed it once

already on his way from Hlekane to Matiba's kraal. The following day, the 4th August, he finds himself at the " Groot Rivier " (which is alleged to be the Olifants River in the Low-country) after having crossed the Haenertsburg mountains now for the fourth time. All the time he is supposed to be misleading his guides, but all the time he is doing nothing else but following his guides, probably to see whether they are finding their way home. Six days later, on the 10th August, 1836, we find Trigardt again at Matiba which is alleged to be the same Matiba as the Matiba's kraal where he was on the 30th July, having now crossed the Haenertsburg mountains for the fifth time.

Crossing the Haenertsburg range in those times was not the negligible undertaking which Trigardt's apparent predilection for doing so might lead one to believe. When you to-day drive up the Haenertsburg range, coming from Pietersburg, and drive down the Maguba Kloof road on easy gradients, you hardly notice that, at Smitsdrift, you are avoiding one range of hills, that near the top of the mountains you swerve round another range, and that beyond Haenertsburg you negotiate yet another ridge; that, in fact, the range consists of several parallel ridges. It has taken the best part of half a century to feel gradually for a road through the Haenertsburg mountains, not mentioning the Letaba ridge and the Mashuti mountains (New Agatha), over which the early roads really went. Even 35 years ago, the roads were still such that, either coming or going, a rider had to lead his horse at least twice. But, in Trigardt's time, even that road did not exist. The native footpaths he had to follow led from ridge to ridge across the intervening valleys. The footpaths connected the native villages, and these, for greater protection, were invariably built on the highest points. In short, crossing the Haenertsburg mountains was not an affair of just hopping over, but was killing work, both for man and horse, especially the latter. Yet, in order to accomplish the route that Trigardt's patrol was supposed to have travelled he would have had to do this feat five times between the 28th July and the 10th August, 1836.

Let us visualise the position during this fortnight between the 28th July and 10th August, 1836. You may easily do so by imagining a triangle one of the short sides of which is lying on the ground sticking the opposite angle into the air slightly to the left, that is, westward. Mark this point in your mind with "A," remembering that it denotes the position of Trigardt's lager. Mark the angle on the other end of the longest line of the triangle, the angle on your right (east), with "B," imagining this point to represent the kraal of Hlekane near the junction of the Olifants and the Limpopo Rivers. Now mark the third point of the triangle, or the angle lying on the ground to your left with "C" and think that this is Matiba's kraal. We know the distance of the longest line, the line that runs from Trigardt's lager "A" in the north-west to Hlekane's kraal "B" in the

south-east corner. Trigardt tells us that the natives were able to do this distance in five to six days; an average of $5\frac{1}{2}$ days. In $5\frac{1}{2}$ days, or less, therefore, the enemy could reach Trigardt's lager on the line BA, and yet, for more than twice that time, for a full fortnight, Trigardt kept moving on the line BC, out of the line of attack, in a country where no distress signal could reach him, occupying his time with repeatedly crossing the Haenertsburg mountains and killing his horses. Can that possibly be the correct version? Was Trigardt mad?

Trigardt is supposed to be back on the 10th August at that same Matiba's kraal which he left on the 31st July, 1836. But, he does not tell us so. On the 31st July, he mentions "Matiba's kraal," but, on the 10th August, he simply records "Matiba" and does not say a word about kraal. Now, it might be supposed that he had left out that word kraal, being perhaps in a hurry, and making his notes on horseback. However, fortunately for us, Trigardt evidently was in a hurry when making the entries during the last week of his ride after Van Rensburg, but he had the good sense to know it, and we find that, arrived in camp, he later duplicates these last entries, adding more details. So let us look up these duplicate entries. Did Trigardt leave out that word kraal in the original entry and did he later add it in the duplicate entry? He did add a word, but it was not the word "Kraal." He added the word "De," which tells us that this second Matiba was certainly not a kraal, but rather a mountain, and was not the same locality as the one he was at 12 days before. The version accepted to-day is that it was.

At last, on the 10th August, 1836, having arrived at point "C" of our triangle, Trigardt decided to go home. Now, something very peculiar happened, according to the accepted version. Point "A," Trigardt's lager could be reached, according to our diagram by travelling over line CA. It is the shortest distance, and the country is easy to travel in. There are no topographical difficulties nor any obstacles. Did Trigardt with his tired horses avail himself of this line CA? Did he take the shortest line home over flat ground, where he could travel fast and easily? To our surprise he did not. With his tired horses he again travelled back on the line CB towards Hlekane's kraal. He evidently did not yet feel like "huis toe." For the sixth time he crossed the Haenertsburg ranges, reached the chief Surubele who is said to have lived in the neighbourhood of New Agatha. Please mark this spot in your imaginary triangle with "D," half-way between C and B. For this point "D" draw a line straight up to the level of point "A," and mark this point "E"; that is Mashao Kop. Connect "E" with "A," and you will have a quadrangle CDEA. Instead of going home on the one side of the quadrangle, on the shortest line CA, Trigardt is alleged to have travelled around the other three sides of it; not only that, but he is made to overshoot point "E,"

Mashao Kop, to Shirindikop by a distance which it takes him two days to recover. Louis Trigardt, however, records that he has done the whole distance from Serubele to Shirindi, about 80 miles, in 5 hours and 20 minutes. As already mentioned, it took him two days to cover a small part of this distance on his return. The whole story is inexplicable; and how it ever was accepted, I do not understand. I do not think that to-day with roads existing, a motor car could get from New Agatha to Shirindi Kop in 5 hours and 20 minutes, and in Trigardt's time there were no roads. There existed, then, two routes for such a journey, and each one would land you in a swamp unless you had perfect guides, who would take into consideration that where a native could travel a horse could not. There was the Duivelskloof route which went through the Malipelipe swamp, and the Rapitsi route which passed through the Selukwe swamps.

The solution is, of course, that that chief Serubele did not live at New Agatha, or, at least, was not the chief of the same name who lived there. We are able to prove this out of Louis Trichardt's diary. Louis Trichardt seems to have been a humorous old man. He gives us much information, but he does not make it easy for readers of his diaries to find it, unless they know the country well, and the history and habits of the natives. Trigardt mostly manages to stick his information away from the dates of his travelling itinerary. So he mentions that they travelled to Serubele on the 11th August, 1836, but only on the 8th October, 1836, does he give us the information that the chief Ramabooya raided Serubele. The explanation is given that this raid was made with the intention of creating differences between the two chiefs. It was only a small raid, as the result consisted of 20 head of cattle, 40 goats and 6 sheep. It is known that this chief Ramabooya lived near Labola Kop, in the Klein Spelonken. Hence the chief Serubele must have lived within striking distance of Ramabooya. It was only a small raid, undertaken by a few courageous men. Ramabooya was, evidently, afraid to attack Serubele on his own ground and preferred to annoy him, so as to entice Serubele to attack him in his own fastnesses. Such small raids are in the nature of surprise visits; surprise is the chief element required for success. Therefore, the men executing such a raid move at night time, raid at dawn, and before the occupants of the attacked kraal are able to get assistance and follow the raiders up, these have disappeared into their own strongholds. This precludes the possibility of a raid by people living near Labola Kop on natives living so far away as New Agatha. Two nights would be required to negotiate such a distance. That means that the movement of the raiders would have been betrayed. Somehow they would have been seen by herd boys standing like tree-stumps for hours on the same spot, or their spoor would have been seen by women going to their fields or fetching water, quite apart from the question of guards and outposts of the tribe squatting like stones on every rise. Having been seen, such a raiding party

would have been destroyed by ambush. But, there is further reason why a raiding party from Ramabooya could not operate on a chief near New Agatha. At that time there existed two kingdoms between Ramabooya and the Banareng tribe living about New Agatha. These were the kingdoms ruled over by the chieftainesses Mamahila and Matjadje, the latter being the original of Sir Rider Haggard's "She." Neither of these chieftainesses would have allowed a raiding party to pass through her country or would, at least, have deprived successful raiders of their booty and restored such booty to its owners. This course would have been adopted in order to avoid being embroiled in a "Malatu"-indaba with the robbed tribe. The robbed tribe would have immediately held the adjoining tribes responsible for having allowed the raiders to pass through their country: the raided tribe would argue that the tribe allowing the robbers to pass through its country was assisting in the deed and would, in the first instance, demand compensation from such neighbours. Such is native custom. Besides that, the Banareng tribe was at that time paying tribute to Matjadje, and consequently was under her protection. If there was any robbing to be done, Matjadje would do it herself. The Banareng territory was her preserve, and no poaching would have been allowed. Further, supposing such a raid had been successful in the first instance, a small party, like the one executing that raid, could not have got away with the booty over that distance, even if there had been no Mamahila or no Matjadje, as raiders driving livestock could not move as quickly as the forces pursuing them, and would have been caught up before they had traversed the 80 miles to their own home. All this shows that Serubele was not the man living near New Agatha, but was a chief living in the neighbourhood of Ramabooya—at least, his raided boundary kraals were near Labola Kop.

But, to continue the present version of Trigardt's trip: After reaching Shirindi, he travelled back and reached Mashoa in two days, on the 14th August, and in two days more he arrived home at his camp. This last four days' travelling is the only part of the present version of Trigardt's ride after Van Rensburg which comes anywhere near the truth. The remainder or the accepted account must be repudiated.

What did really happen?

After the return of General Potgieter from Mashonaland, Louis Trigardt—with his son Carolus and three of Potgieter's men—set off, about the 26th July, 1836, in search of the Van Rensburg trek. Being under the impression that Van Rensburg's party were circling round towards the south-east, Trigardt, after consultation with Potgieter, adopted the same plan as Potgieter had followed. He tried to cut across Van Rensburg's spoor. It was agreed that Trigardt should cut across country in a south-easterly direction. After travelling a couple of days the first horse died; the following day or so,

another. Trigardt now found himself in the neighbourhood of Bandlerkop travelling towards where Legali siding is now located. Here he noticed the appearance of a range of mountains on his left, the Haenertsburg-Woodbush-Groot Spelonken range. To avoid these mountains he changed his route to a point slightly more south. But very soon another range of mountains appeared in front of him stretching across his intended road. It was the Malips range, that runs from Haenertsburg towards Potgietersrust. Trigardt noticed how these two ranges, the one on his left and the one in front of him, close up solidly; and that he was riding into an angle closed up by high, steep mountain ranges. His road south-east was blocked. He was now on about the northern boundary of the present-day farm Melkboomfontein. He enquired from the natives where he was, and was informed that these were Matiba's kraals—that is, that these people were Matiba's people, which does not mean that he was at Matiba's head kraal. This was on the 30th July, 1836. The following morning Trigardt decided that it would be of no use continuing in that direction, and resolved to turn back. However, before actually riding back in the direction he came from, he gave this plan (of riding south-east and so cutting across Van Rensburg's spoor) another trial. He had noticed a gap in the mountain range which had accompanied him on his left, and he tried to get through this gap, or see, at least, where this gap would lead. So in going back he swerved to his right towards those mountains which he had had on his left the day before—that is, he travelled north-east. He reached this gap which led him to Middle Letaba Valley, a deep valley, the canyon of the upper Middle Letaba, south of Munnik, about where the Buffel road goes down the mountain to-day. He had a magnificent view over the Low-country, a view which equals the one from the Maguba's kloof. But, across his south-eastern route there stretches another mountain range, the Woodbush-Matjadje range, and further in the Low-country he sees more ranges, more groups of hills and mountains. He now recognises that he will never be able to come across Van Rensburg's spoor that way, that the chances are that, whilst he travels down one side of a range, Van Rensburg might be travelling along the other side.

It is now, not towards the end of his trip after Van Rensburg, but right at the beginning of the undertaking, that he recognises the futility of their plans, and that Trigardt, feeling despondent and despairing of ever finding Van Rensburg, sits down and starts his diary. He knows he will have to report to his leader, Potgieter, and as soon as the plans decided on have to be abandoned, as soon as he recognises that this riding after Van Rensburg will be a complicated job, he starts to make notes. His first entry is made on the 31st July, 1836, when he is partly on his way back, when he has decided on going back and on following the actual spoor of Van Rensburg. His entry says:

"Van Matiba's kraal getrokken 5½ uur terug tot een valy." The following day he cut across country in a north-westerly direction and reaches, according to his entry, on the 1st August, "Tweede verlies." Investigators have not been able to explain what this "Tweede verlies" means. I think it is quite simple to do so. On that day he struck his own spoor on the trail by which he had come to Matiba's kraal, at a spot where on the forward journey his party had lost their second horse. No Boer would forget such a spot, and if he should later mention this spot as the one where they had lost their second horse, every one of them would know which place he was referring to. A few days later he mentioned that they had lost their third horse. So I do not see any difficulty in the solution of this "Tweede verlies" enigma. Trigardt is now back on his own trail.

Trigardt, whilst building his lager and whilst hunting in the neighbourhood, had probably followed the spoor of Van Rensburg before, for some distance. He had, probably, also seen the grave of one of Van Rensburg's men near the Sand River. Anyhow, he knew where he could strike Van Rensburg's spoor, and he made for it. Two days after leaving "Tweede verlies," he struck the spoor at the Sand River, at the drift where Van Rensburg crossed. He enters in his diary: "3de Augustus, tot de Sandrivier." That was west of the present Louis Trichardt village.

From the Sand River, Trigardt followed the spoor of Van Rensburg past Elim down to the Limvubu drift near Valdezia Mission Station, which drift he reached on the 4th August, recording "Grootrivier" in his diary. The Limvubu is very broad here and contains much water.

The following day he still kept on Van Rensburg's spoor, skirting the great Litenando swamp, and recrossing the Limvubu River. Here he met with the first Knobnose or Magwamba induna. Trigardt records: 5th August, that he met the first Knobnose induna. It is this entry that should have exploded long ago the version that on reaching Matiba's kraal on the 30th July, Trigardt was on his return journey from Sakana, as I have explained before. It was now the first time that Trigardt entered Magwamba territory.

Here he left the spoor of Van Rensburg and went to Hlekane's kraal by a roundabout way. This is somewhat peculiar. I explain it this way. This Magwamba induna, whom Trigardt met, was a sub-induna of the big induna 'NKuri whose men, not having met with much resistance as explained in my history of the country's occupation by the chief Hlekane, had pushed further ahead than the forces under the induna. Tshikundo, who was being held up at Matiba's Kop. Trigardt was, naturally, in the habit of making enquiries from natives he met with whether they knew anything of other white people. Now this sub-induna of 'NKuri must have informed Trigardt.

that he knew other white people, knowing all the time that that party had been murdered, and must have offered Trigardt to bring him to them. Knowing the fate of the Van Rensburg expedition, and knowing what was in store for Trigardt and his party, this induna and his men, naturally, wanted the credit of having played this party of white men into the hands of Hlekane. If they had led Trigardt by the shortest route, by which Hlekane later sent Trigardt back, they would have only delivered these white people into the hands of the induna Tskikundo, who promptly would have taken their quasi prisoners from 'NKuri's people, and would not have thanked them, but would have chased them away. If, on the other hand, the induna 'NKuri heard of such stupidity on the part of his men he would probably have killed these natives for delivering his prisoners into the hands of a rival induna. Hence the Knobnosen, that Trigardt met with on the 5th August, led the white men a round-about way, through territory occupied by their chief-induna 'NKuri.

Trigardt records on the 6th August, that he travelled as far as "De Jukoeri." "De Jukoeri" must have been the Ijsterberg, which had been occupied by that time by 'NKuri's son of the same name. After travelling, or being led, for three days after meeting the first Magwamba, Trigardt reached the Olifantsbush on the 8th August. That is the bush country beyond 'NKuri's chief kraal, the special elephant reserve, the Mayendu country (Mayendwen), where elephants abounded at that time.

Evidently Trigardt was not brought into chief induna 'NKuri's kraal, near Dzendwen Kop. Perhaps his guides did not want to frighten the white people by showing them so many natives of whose temper, after the victory over Van Rensburg, they were not quite certain. Perhaps, and that is even more probable, 'NKuri was still at Hlekane's chief kraal, still celebrating the victory over the white invaders.

It was on the 9th August, 1836, that Louis Trigardt and his party reached the kraal of Hlekane, the murderer of Van Rensburg. They had ridden that day only $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours, according to Trigardt's diary. Evidently, they had not been allowed to proceed further, to prevent them coming across the spoor of the Van Rensburg trek, a spoor that those Boers could not possibly have overlooked, and which would have very soon brought them to the place of the massacre. In order to prevent Trigardt from proceeding, he was, with his party, very hospitably treated. He was given the food of the indunas and chiefs; he was given "Suurbier." Trigardt calls the place "Suurbier." This word gives us a lot of information. It tells us that Trigardt was at a Magwamba kraal, because, at that time, this particular kind of beer was not brewed by the other tribes which Trigardt had so far passed through. They only learned it from the Magwamba,

and never have become so efficient in brewing this kind of beer as the people who brought them that knowledge. This is, probably, because the high veld tribes, and also the Mavenda, want a "kick" in their beers—want to get drunk on it as soon and as quickly as possible. Hence, with other tribes, the *suurbier* has been relegated to the women as it is a non-intoxicating drink, whereas with the Magwamba it is a "Great Men's" drink, and the women have to be more careful how they brew it. In the warmer climate, where the Magwamba come from, the men, after a night's carousal in particular, often do not feel like taking solid food, but this "suurbier" a man, even with an upset stomach, can always take. When men stricken with fever cannot retain other food, when their weakened stomachs are unable to assimilate any solid food at all, this "suurbier" has saved many a man. It is a thickish drink, similar in a way to the "magau" made by some natives from what is left over of the porridge, but it is much cleaner and is fermented by germinated niaut (Nyuti) or, sometimes, kaffircorn. It effervesces, has a sweet-sour taste, and is non-intoxicating. Trigardt seems to have been very fond of native beer, according to his diary, but he had never before come across this variety. This may be the reason for his recording the place he was at as "suurbier." However, there may be another reason for his doing so. The Magwamba name of this particular brew is "NDleka." When men are sitting under the big shade tree near the entrance of a kraal, and a pot of this beer is brought them, the host will call out: "NDlekane, NDlekane" (let us drink NDleka). His guests will leave their work of stitching mats, making grass ropes, basket manufacture, spoon cutting, or whatever they were employing themselves with, and moving up to the beer pot will repeat: "NDlekane, NDlekane!" You will observe that this "NDlekane," although spelled differently, sounds, specially to an ear unaccustomed to native languages, very similar to, if not identical with "Hlekane," the name of the chief responsible for the annihilation of Van Rensburg's trek, the name of the kraal at which Trigardt then was. It is quite likely, and would be in accordance with native custom, that Trigardt should not yet have seen the chief "Hlekane." If he had, native custom would have demanded that the chief drink with him. The chief probably avoided doing so, and thereby proclaiming himself as the white people's host and protector, when it was his intention to murder them the following morning. Whilst he had the whites well-treated, he did not want to proclaim them his guests. When the "Suurbier" was brought to Trigardt the latter probably became suspicious, or at least curious, and having enquired at whose kraal he was he had very likely enquired where then was "Hlekane," the chief. In answer, the men accompanying the beer pot had probably shouted, pointing at the beer pot: "NDlekane, NDlekane." Perhaps it was their joke; natives are fond of such jokes. Perhaps it was Trigardt's joke to put down the chief's name as

"suurbier." We do not know. Whatever it was, whatever the reason, one thing remains, the similarity of this "NDlekane (let us drink the suurbier) with the name of the chief "Hlekane."

The following morning, one of Trigardt's party, getting up early, noticed that the kraal was surrounded by armed natives. Trigardt does not tell us anything about this. The source of this information is probably his son Carolus. It is then said that Trigardt kept his nerve and told the natives that he found the country suitable, and that he would go and fetch his wagons. The natives, hoping to get possession of his wagons and further loot gave him guides to show him a shorter road home.

It was thus that Trigardt left "Hlekane's" kraal on the 10th August, 1836, on his return journey. According to Trigardt's diary, the Boers went that day in the direction of Matiba Kop, which is now called Tshikundo Kop, but was then occupied by chief Pafuri's induna Matiba. Passing Matiba's Kop, Trigardt and his party went the following day to Shebolane Hill. It is this place which I take to represent Trigardt's Serubele, the locative Serebulane being contracted into Shebolane. From here Trigardt went, on the 12th August, in the direction of Shirindi about which place there can be no mistake, the kopje being too well known. The following day, the return journey was continued to a place "De Draai." As there has been some discussion where this place might have been I just wish to mention that, amongst the old Boers, the big Draai, or big bend, of the Limvubu River where it turns to the north, to avoid the northern continuation of high ground of the Ijsterberg mountains, was known by the name "De Draai" (The Bend). On the 14th, the travellers went past the Mashao Kop, on its north side, and on the 15th they reached the drift of the Sand River, and Trigardt and his men got to his lager on the 16th August, 1836.

This concluded the second attempt to find Van Rensburg. The tragedy of these first two attempts is, that if either General Potgieter or Louis Trigardt had followed the spoor of Van Rensburg's wagons in the first instance, they would probably have saved his expedition from the fate that overtook it.

A few days after the return of Louis Trigardt, the third attempt to reach Van Rensburg was undertaken by some of Trigardt's people. Four men, under the leadership of Jan Pretorius, a somewhat impulsive young man, left Trigardt with their wagons and families. This expedition kept on the spoor of Van Rensburg's wagons and so reached the kraal of Hlekane. But they evidently were not allowed to go further. At any rate, they did not see the place of massacre of the Van Rensburg expedition. At the kraal of Hlekane they, like Trigardt and his party, saw property belonging to the Van Rensburg people. There is a version which implies that Pretorius went westwards beyond the Limpopo. I do not think that he

did. Why should he? He had better evidence, or thought he had than Trigardt, that the Van Rensburg trek had come to a foul end, having heard children cry in a straw hut, which children he took to be white children. He was travelling in the rainy season; he had had already some experience of what full rivers mean in those parts; his cattle were starting to die from tsetse fly infection, and some of his people had already contracted fever. There could have been only one thing in his mind, and that was to return as quickly as possible before the rainy season would set in in earnest.

I think that the version that Pretorius continued eastward and crossed the Limpopo pushing for some considerable distance beyond this river is based on a misunderstanding of what the word "Skoff" means. Pretorius in a letter to Trigardt, of which Trigardt made a copy in his diary, as he did of all letters, mentions that he had trekked "30 schoff" further than the Tzinde River. These "Skoffs" have been taken to mean day journeys. I have been trekking about a great deal with Boers, and found that skoff means one trek only; there are morning skoffs and night skoffs, short skoffs and long skoffs. Skoff means verbally neck, the neck of an ox. Every time the yoke is put on the necks of the trek oxen to inspan them, it is a "Skoff. Now in that difficult country the skoffs could not have averaged many miles, and many a skoff might have been only 2 miles long.

Pretorius returned upon his own spoor until he found himself north of the Tzinde River. By this time, he had lost too many oxen by the tsetse fly to move any further. His wagons were bogged, and he probably found the Tzinde River in flood. From here, he wrote two letters to Trigardt asking for assistance, and for trek oxen. At the beginning of these letters there are a couple of words which, so far, have puzzled investigators. These are the words "Voor tun." Some weird attempts have been made at solving the meaning of these words. It has been suggested that they represent "Voortang," referring to this trek as a fore-part of a wagon, on account of the treks under Van Rensburg and Trigardt having been referred to as Potgieter's "voorst mense." I think this explanation is rather far-fetched, and the spelling of "Voor tun" and "Voortang" is too dissimilar. Even Pretorius could not have twisted "tang" into "tun." Another explanation is that "Voor tun" means a mealie tuin or garden, wherein there was a water furrow. Why should it? Reconstruct the position for a moment. Pretorius required Trigardt to send him oxen. Trigardt must be told where Pretorius is. Pretorius has mentioned in his letters the Tzinde River, but must give further information. Now, would such an indication as a mealie land with a water furrow in it be of any use to Trigardt? Would it convey to him the required information? Is a mealie garden with a water furrow in it a land mark? The country is full of

mealie lands. That cannot be the meaning. But, those Boers trekking into a strange land made enquiries about the tribes living there, about the chiefs ruling over them. In the evening, at their camp fires, they have been discussing these tribes, these chiefs. That "Voor" is simply a corruption of the name of the chief Pafuri. It is well known that the natives give distinct intonation to the penultimate syllable, swallow the last one, and slur over the remainder of a word. Of the name Pafuri, what came distinctly to the ears of the Boers and made an impression on their memory, was the syllable "Fur." Pretorius was, at the moment of writing, in the country of the chief Pafuri, and the kraal of this chief used to be situated on a hill overlooking the country, and a big and imposing kraal it was. The English spelling of "Fur" by Pretorius with "Voor" can be easily understood, if it is borne in mind that these people came from the Cape, an English colony where English was the official language, where all proclamations were issued in English. These Boers were not exactly uneducated, but they were not educated much in regard to their spelling. In Louis Trigardt's diary, we find some weird spelling and a mixture of words from different languages, even German. And Louis Trigardt was much better educated than Pretorius. This "Voor tun" (Tuin-tegen) simply meant: In the direction of or towards the chief Pafuri's.

Before assistance reached Pretorius' people, Gert Scheepers, one of the members of that expedition, died of fever. The letters by Pretorius to Trigardt were written on the 17th and 20th January, 1837, but, on account of rain, Trigardt could send assistance and oxen only on the 30th January, 1837, under his son Pieter. Evidently acting under direction of Louis Trigardt, Pretorius then left the spoor of Van Rensburg's trek and crossed to the right bank of the Limvubu below its junction with the Tzinde River. The trek followed the route that was shown to Trigardt by Hlekane's guides, keeping south of the Limvubu where the ground is higher, drier and has no side-streams to be forded. Still, it took Pretorius another month to reach Trigardt's camp. Pretorius had been away more than six months, and must have had a terrible time in that rainy season, from rain, full rivers, bogged ground, tsetse fly and fever.

So ended the three attempts to find the Van Rensburg trek.
